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The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Missing Efforts to combat Human Trafficking in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a transit and destination country for trafficking in person as well as a country of origin for victims of trafficking. The Iranian state has always faced human trafficking issues due to geographical location and lack of measures by the Iranian authorities to prevent trafficking and to develop strategies that address the root causes and risk factors. The issue has been invisible by lack of official statistics and estimations, freedom of expression, freedom of associations and free press. In December 2013 the semi official Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) quoted Iran's passport issues police department chief, General Mahmoud Sadeghi: "We do not deny girls' trafficking to Arabian countries but the number is not considerable" at an INTERPOL Regional Operational Workshop on "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" in Tehran.[1] At the same event Homayun Hashemi, the head of Iran's government-run Social Welfare Organisation, was quoted: "Certain statistics have no positive function in society; instead, they have a negative psychological impact. It is better not to talk about them."[2]
There has only been social recognition of this issue inside the country through Iranian human rights activists and some media coverage[3] from 2003 to 2005, when Mohammad Khatami served as Iran's president.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation

Social awareness on the issue of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Iran rose after Bam quake in 2003. Human rights activist Khadijeh Moghadam, who helped as a volunteer victims devastated by the disaster, reported orphans missing in Sina Camp. Foster families sold the children in return for 3000 Dollars to traffickers. Additionally some quake-affected families forced their young daughters to marry old men in surrounding villages. Iranian authorities made no effort to address those trafficking issues.
Women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation domestically and externally into Persian Gulf countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan, more limited to European and Asian countries as well as more recently to China. Additionally Afghan, Pakistani, Eastern Europeans, Chinese and Iraqi women are trafficked into the I.R. Iran.
There were news on an Iranian site featuring information on an auction of Iranian women in the United Arab Emirates[4] and a report on 45 Iranian women subjected to sexual slavery in Karachi[5].
There are specific vulnerability factors for women and girls of becoming trafficking victims in the I.R. Iran such as poverty, drug addiction, sexual abuse, domestic violence, pre-arranged marriages as well as divorce as case studies of "Runaway Girls in Social Emergency and Rehabilitation Centre of Shiraz, Iran" specifies.[6] In recent years also the number of girls as well as boys on the streets has increased.

Child trafficking

Children in the I.R. Iran are victims of forced slavery, exploitation, sex slavery, pornography industry and for the thriving business of body parts. There are no precise data regarding this issue but the growing number of early school leaving and child labour indicates child trafficking. According to official statistics 39000[7] children do not attend school

[1] http://www.insideofiran.org/humanright/12440-1392-09-11-11-32-50.html
[2] http://iranrooyan.org/657/
[3] On 19 December 2003 the "Shargh" newspaper published a report on "The Sale of Iranian Girls to the United Arab Emirates" about an auction of 54 Iranian girls and quoted Mostafa Ben Yahya, an United Arab Emirates airline pilot, announcing an average of 10 to 15 girls sent to the United Arab Emirates everyday on nine ordinary flights and 20 irregular flights from Iran to Dubai and corpses of three to five Iranian girls taken to Iran every month.
[4] http://asre-nou.net/1383/khordad/7/m-fajire.html
[5] http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php?/news2/17972/
[6] Demographic, Personality and Psychopathology Characteristics of the Runaway Girls in Social Emergency and Rehabilitation Centre of Shiraz, Iran http://ijpbs.mazums.ac.ir/files/site1/user_files_ef0cde/godadmin-A-10-2-6-3e69596.pdf
[7] http://www.jamejamnews.ir/NewsPreview/1378107137323726935

in 2013 and at all and 80000 children in primary school drop out of school annually. According to statistics in 2011, 9,719,000 children older than six years are illiterate[8].
Children of Afghans migrants are particularly victims of child trafficking. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission reported that most of the Afghan victims that are trafficked to the I.R. Iran are boys (70 %) that are mostly exploited for domestic works, agriculture, daily wage, and sale. More than 6 % of them are exploited for sex trafficking and more than 19 % for distribution and selling drugs in the I.R. Iran.[9]

Trafficking for labour exploitation

Trafficking for labour exploitation is widespread in the I.R. Iran and in the region, due to increasing unemployment and poverty. The legislation of "exemption of sweatshops with 10 or less workers from labour law legislation" in 2012 paved the way for trafficking for labour exploitation. According to Iranian human rights activists in carwashes in Tehran workers are enslaved without contract and even without wages and are living only on tips.
Migrants, mostly Afghans, are reported of being subjected to labour exploitation, including debt bondage, restriction of movement, nonpayment, and physical or sexual abuse. The Dhaka Tribune reported on April 18, 2014 that twelve Bangladeshi migrants, who were abducted by a gang of human traffickers in I.R. Iran, returned home. One of the victims, Shafiqul Islam of Brahmanbaria, said that a middleman named Hanif promised him a job in a market. He paid Tk 150,000 and later he was taken to Port Abbas in the I.R. Iran. Along with few others he was confined in a house near a jungle. He was threatened that they would sell his kidney[10] if he fails to pay Tk 800,000 within two days.[11]

Legislative, policy and institutional framework

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a part of Convention on the Rights of the Child, but is not a party to the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. In 2004 the Iranian Parliament passed a law to prohibit trafficking of persons by means of threat or use of force, coercion, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability of the victim for purposes of prostitution, slavery, or forced marriage. Under this law, those convicted of engaging in human trafficking can receive a sentence of 2-5 years imprisonment. Those convicted of attempted human trafficking will receive a sentence of 6 months – 2 years prison terms.
Prominent law specialist Mahnaz Parakand argues that the law suffers from drawbacks in comparison to previous legislations including "Children and Teenagers Support law" by not defining organized crime, conditioning penalty, lack of preventive legislation and support for victim. In addition organ trafficking is not included and penalty for accomplice in cases of organized trafficking is not predicted.
Human rights activists reported that these laws remained unenforced due to a lack of political will and widespread corruption. Women who were victims of sexual abuse were accountable to be prosecuted for betrayal, which is defined as sexual relations outside of marriage and is punishable by death.

Recommendations to the Islamic Republic of Iran

- Develop and build capacity for systematic data collection in collaboration with civil; society organizations to increase the knowledge on trafficking issues to identify protect and assist trafficked persons and share the data with the UN;
- Ratify the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children;
- Ensure that victims, especially women, are not criminalized or punished for unlawful acts directly resulting from their situations as trafficked persons;
- Provide comprehensive assistance to all trafficked persons;
- Strengthen cooperation with other countries to improve the identification and protection of victims ;
- Review the 2004 trafficking law in relation to international standards.

[8] http://tts902.blogsky.com/1392/04/24/post-454/
[9] http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_report_156.pdf
[10] The I.R. Iran is one of the few countries in the world where the organ trade is legal
[11] http://www.dhakatribune.com/labour/2014/apr/18/12-human-trafficking-victims-return-home-iran